

SYSTEMATIC STUDY

What is Study?

For many students attention in class, notes, and a frantic initial reading of all assigned textbook material before a test is "study"; reading the text is "study"; laborious reading and re-reading of the text is "study"; painfully memorising facts (major, minor, insignificant, all items on a par) is "study"; agonising over an assignment with no constructive work accomplished is "study". Study means "I gotta go read my History".

Students acquire study techniques from classmates, friends and academic staff. Academic staff are presumably the best source of assistance since by their experience and knowledge of the purpose of the course, they know the methods best suited to the mastery of that particular course. However, large numbers of intelligent persons continue to flounder through courses which ought to be pleasant, stimulating experiences because they persist in believing they have studied when they have only read. This can be disastrous if the student also happens to be a poor reader.

Study involves gaining familiarity with the principal ideas presented and the pertinent details or arguments which support them. Study requires familiarity with the new vocabulary introduced and ease in using it. Study requires recognition of the relatedness of the principal ideas to one another and the unit of the whole chapter. Above all, study demands the use of the new ideas. This use comes in answering any thought-provoking questions which may come at the end of the chapter, or in tutorial discussions, or perhaps in revision sessions. The **SQ3R system** shows how these requirements of study can be satisfied. The letters are initials of five important verbs: **SURVEY, QUESTION, READ, RECALL** and **REVIEW**.

Survey

At the beginning of a course, the lecturer usually describes the structure of the course, pointing out its general content, its purpose and slant, and the manner in which it will develop. In similar fashion the SQ3R method of study guides a careful survey of the content of the assigned reading. The purpose is to secure a picture of a chapter or an article as a whole, its orderly development, and its relationship to the overall subject.

The notes below describe the application of SQ3R to a textbook chapter, but a similar approach can be used in reading other forms of text as well.

1. Fix the purpose for your reading in your mind. This is what you want to get from the reading.
2. Pay careful attention to the introduction of the chapter. Ordinarily its function is to supply sufficient background for recognising the purpose of the chapter.

Secondly, it may state specifically the method of development the author intends to follow. Both are important in grasping the chapter as a whole.

Fortunately most textbooks are divided into sections, each headed by a title in larger and heavier type. This is the name of the idea to be presented, and the author thinks it is important.

Occasionally there may be subordinate headings under the larger one or in the margin of the page. These are usually the names of important details which prove or develop the larger idea.

3. Go through the chapter heading by heading; they will form a topical outline. This will provide help for those who say, "I never know what is important. I don't know where to put the emphasis". The author has named them for you!
4. If there is a summary at the end of the chapter, read it carefully to see which ideas the author restates for special emphasis or what general conclusion he/she comes to which may be the statement of the main idea of the chapter.

Question

- i. Turn back to the beginning of the chapter. If you have a specific question, eg. an essay or assignment, then go back to that question and see if your preliminary reading has altered your understanding of the question. If you are reading to increase your knowledge of the book then try this process:

Change the name of the chapter into a question. For example: If the name of the chapter in a government textbook is "The Judiciary" your question could be "What is the Judiciary and what part does it play in our government?" That is what you are to be able to discuss fully when you finish your study of the chapter.

- ii. Re-read the introduction to the chapter. It will have more meaning for you now and you can see more clearly its purpose.
- iii. Make a question out of the first major sub-heading. For example: The first heading in our chapter on the Judiciary may be "Constitutional Courts". The question could be "What are Constitutional Courts". The question could be "What are Constitutional Courts and how do they function in our Judiciary?" Perhaps there is a marginal note. In our example make a question out of the marginal note, "Need for Constitutional Courts?" Thus, there are two questions for which we must find the answers before we can answer the original question, "What are Constitutional Courts and what part do they play in our Judiciary?"

It helps fix the question in your mind if you write it down. You are ready to ask the author a question and are likely to pay attention to the answer which will be given to you.

Read

Holding the question clearly in mind, read the section of the chapter which develops and answers the question. There is now a clearly defined purpose for reading to find the answer to the question and the reason why the author believes it to be true. Now you can read inquisitively and with the aggressiveness of interest. You can work with precision and directness because you know what you are trying to find. You will gain skill in thinking as you read and in recognising the answer and its supporting argument.

Recall

If it is important for you to remember what you have read, then:

1. Close your book.
2. Recall the answer to the questions which you made before you began to read. Answer fully and be sure to include the reasons why the author believes the answer is true. It may be necessary to revise your original question after the reading to include any **whereas** and **whens** or **hows** and **whys** that have appeared. The key to success lies in recalling the answer, not copying it. The safest way is to write it down in the form of an outline, a short paragraph, a chart, diagram or formula.
3. Check your answer by referring to the book - re-reading or skimming to locate and verify your points. Correct and add to your answer when necessary.

The written recall is a guard against a careless **assumption** that the answer can be recalled. Many students are satisfied with the **feeling** of understanding the answer and never get around to **testing their own accuracy**.

The recall is practised as frequently as the nature of the text material and the demands of the course require. The written recall, in physical appearance, results in an outline of the material, but has required mental activities far beyond the usually eye-hand activity exercised in **copying** the text material in outline form.

It is true that the recalled answer will be no better than the student's skill in reading allows, but persistence in performing this exacting task increases the reading skill and results in a generally improved performance.

Repeat the 'Question-Read-Recall' process for the successive headings in the chapter.

Review

One of the purposes of the **Survey** is to achieve chapter unity. Few undergraduates can gulp down a whole chapter as a unit. The **Question-Read-Recall** process divides the chapter into sections which can be assimilated separately and in order by the student. The **Review** puts it back together again. In the review you are

answering your big chapter single question -- in our example, "What is the Judiciary and what part does it play in our Government?"

1. To Review, recall rapidly the answer to the whole series of questions answered by the chapter. The purpose is to recapture the original survey unity and is an exercise in delaying recall in contrast to the immediate recall of the

Question-Read-Recall process. You have your notes and the book for quick reference in case your memory fails in some points.

The natural objection of the SQ3R is that it is slow. It is slower than the process of a single reading. It may be slower than two readings of the same material. But, it is a solution to the problem proposed by the time worn advice, "Well, you'll just have to work harder".

SQ3R is a set of ideas for you to try out and adapt to your own situation. Ask around for other ideas, from friends, academic staff, more advanced students. If you are still floundering, then make an appointment at the **University Counselling Service**.

